Elden Ring DLC Memos A1

Filename: 2024-06-18 15-40-16 (Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 07/07/25 A1

00:00 I'm finding it very hard to even start watching the video, because I don't want to hear my own voice. It's early evening now (7pm roughly) and it's interesting to think that I'm watching this about a year since we actually did the initial survey.

00:27 I spend the first 30 seconds or so setting up. I think I say I'm starting at around 6pm, but it's really hard to hear because the opening Elden Ring theme is so loud and now I'm worried I won't be able to hear my voice over the in-game music.

00:45 I can hear a bit better now I'm at the location. In the bottom right hand corner there's a yellow wifi icon that keeps appearing that indicates the internet connection is bad. The footage is also a bit juddery.

1:18 I'm explaining the decision to only focus on messages in this location, rather than bloodstains, and this is because we're less interested in focusing on how people died to the boss. I think in retrospect it is interesting, but we were making a compromise in what we wanted to focus on with limited time.

2:23 I'm kind of just standing at the entrance and explaining the methodology, it feels like I'm really explaining it to myself to get it clear in my mind more than anything. It is quite useful to me in the future though because I didn't remember the thought process from the time. I talk about how as a compromise we will look at the messages all around where the "egg" is that gives you access to the DLC, and potentially some at the entrance to the mausoleum as well (there's some dramatic irony here as me from the future knows that those messages will become a set part of the survey area).

2:49 I look at the first message (it's one that says "edge" and there's a ghost of a player literally sat at an edge). This reminds me that one of the big differences this time with the survey is that we saw a lot more player "gestures" alongside the messages. I deliberately angle the camera so that the viewer can see the front of the player "ghost" and then take a screenshot, which results in my character doing a right-hand slice motion because the key mapping on the Steam Deck results in this happening. Its pretty embarrassing to watch because its so jarring and looking back I realise that it was probably relatively easy to change the keymapping in some way.

3:48 At this point I'm trying to get up on one of the headstones to access a message that's been placed up there. It's pretty painful to watch because I know how difficult and frustrating I found it not to be able to reach it, and I feel that now. This also reminds me that verticality was a much bigger concern in this survey - trying to get to message in odd, high up places.

4:22 It's interesting in that I think I can actually hear clicks in the background of me struggling with the stem deck trying to get up onto the gravestone to see the message.

4:26 I think the ghost of another player jumping near the headstone (possibly trying to do what I'm doing!) is visible in the background!

4:55 At this point I finally give up after loudly jumping ineffectively all that time.

5:15 I actually double back and take a screenshot and say "it is interesting" but I'm not sure if its worth spending so much time trying to reach this one single message. Its interesting that I remember to take a screenshot though, watching it back I didn't even notice I hadn't done it.

5:48 I comment on how when I've been in the location previously I didn't see any messages left at the "outskirts" of the mausoleum, i.e. outside of the main central aisle where there is debris and tombstones. I actually don't remember when I visited this location prior to the survey. I do also remember that this pattern did hold for the entirety of the survey but I kept going back to check anyway.

6:50 I comment on how I think that a message I see inside the mausoleum is a reference to the DLC. Right now I am stopping and starting the footage to write and so I'm sort of taken in and out of the recording all the time. I've also been watching this a little bit at a time throughout the evening as I do other things like make dinner. It's been a difficult evening because I'm worried I might have a sore throat, I'm going to Brighton tomorrow for the Develop conference and there's a potential bed bug infestation in my flat.

7:01 At this point the screen completely freezes, player character frozen mid stride. The sound is glitching. Then you can hear me comment on it, so my audio is still working. This continues on until 8:57 where I finally say "I'm actually going to stop the recording." It's actually kind of both excruciating and fascinating to watch, especially because I have no memory of this happening. I keep thinking how there is this sense of waiting involved, both as me as an active player back then and me as the passive viewer now - waiting to see if something will work.

8:58 The screen is now black but the sound is back. "I think we should be back again." You can hear the flames of the mausoleum crackling in the background.

9:13 I can hear myself interacting with a message but I still can't see anything, just a black screen, which is worrying. What if it doesn't come back? Why didn't I check this earlier?

9:26 Suddenly you can see my chrome browser, which is a real shock, as I did not intend to record this. Funnily enough you can see I've searched for "mirror steam deck to pc" Something that strikes me immediately about this Google search result is that there is no automatically AI generated answer at the top. It really feels like a window into another time, though it was only 12 months ago. You can also see I have three other browser tabs open, one of my inbox (20,376 unread messages), a google drive page ("Spreadsheet") and a Google sheets file titled "Elden Ring Survey." This must be the original spreadsheet intended to record artefacts in, which I now need to go back to reference. I'm actually surprised there

aren't more tabs open and this didn't accidentally capture more personal stuff, which is a relief.

9:31 Suddenly it goes back to the live feed from Elden Ring, the equipment menu is up so I must have been sorting stuff out with the Steam deck in the interim.

10:17 Message "likely dung" with the gesture of someone pointing down in front of them. I think I ended up seeing several like this.

11:04 Another dung-related message and a weird gesture that looks odd given where my player character is standing. I don't know if it is intentionally placed there for that effect or not, but it makes me uncomfortable.

11:53 I'm talking about messages I might have seen before but it's difficult to make out what I'm saying.

12:56 I'm right in front of the egg and I say "I did see some messages here before actually" - I don't know if that was prior to having to reboot or not, potentially. I think I'm disappointed not to record them at that location where there would be a clear association with the DLC.

13:20 I see a message that says "try jumping" near an edge. It has 282 appraisals. I say "that's good going." I do not sound impressed.

13:57 When I see a message that reads "gorgeous view ahead" I angle the camera so that I can see the stars in the distance more clearly and frame the shot better. It's funny to think that the message itself prompted this.

14:37 Because I'm taking screenshots near the edge of a cliff and it makes me do a right swipe there's a risk I might fall off and its kind of nerve-wracking to watch.

15:15 I keep stopping to focus on where messages are in the landscape to make sure I have a record of where they are spatially which is useful.

16:00 I come back round to the front of the egg and see a message "that was definitely not there before." I get the sense that I really want to see messages that I can clearly connect with the DLC.

16:35 I do a close-up on the associated gesture with the message here to take in all the figure's amour and pose. It's strange seeing my player character kind of overlaid in the background.
17:37 It stops abruptly here, as it seems I am satisfied I have recorded enough.

Filename: 2024-06-18 15-40-16 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 09/07/25 A1

0:00 Starting this memo at around 6:30pm in the evening, sat on my bed with my laptop on my knees, listening with headphones as usual. I have been sick for the last few days but wanted to do a little bit of work and this video is only 3 minutes long.

0:01 The video starts off with me already loaded into the Church of Elleh, it's raining (in-game).

0:23 It's quite hard to hear what I'm saying over the in-game music unfortunately, but I am narrating the process. I start from outside the entrance.

00:36 It's quite funny hearing the sheep braying in the background. I think I notice background noises more watching the footage than playing the game, There's a message near the entrance of the church that says "so lonely…" and the accompanying gesture is someone splayed out on the floor. Again, just seems kind of funny, especially juxtaposed against my player character and the sombre setting.

00:58 I see a message referring an enemy with a fair amount of appraisals near the entrance and make the connection with the tree sentinel enemy that is stationed nearby until they are defeated (they are not present in my the survey because I'm using A2's save data and I can only assume he defeated it and that's why it's not there).

01:22 It's easier to make out what I'm saying when I'm making a more definitive statement (I'm now really hoping I later lower the in-game volume in the recordings, I think I do). At this point I see a message near the wall where a character called Ranni can appear and make the connection (this was also a trend we saw in the previous survey).

01:48 I see a message that says "behold, great tree!" and then angle the camera so you can see the Erdtree in the background. Again, this is an example of me being prompted by the message to reframe my recording.

02:00 I'm a bit nervous watching this because I know at some point I accidentally hit the merchant while taking a screenshot - again, there's some dramatic irony here.

02:23 I record a blood stain ghost and because I'm holding a long sword it weirdly looks like I'm the one stabbing them to their death because of where the ghost falls in relation to me.

Filename: 2024-06-19 23-34-39 (Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 23/07/25 A1

00:09 Starts out with black screen and voice over. I can hear my voice a lot better so I must have sorted out the volume levels. I say it's about half 11 at night - this confirms my memory that I did a lot of these surveys late at night.

00:59 I actually start back in the Church of Elleh again. I pan round and comment on the same messages being present as before.

01:34 I make the decision to leave and come back in the hope that will spawn new messages in the area. This is also something I did in the previous survey - you get a certain feel for how you can "prod" the game to produce more messages.

01:50 Because of the order in which I'm viewing the sites you get the opportunity to see me then navigate the map to fast travel to the mausoleum. This makes me think about how different the experience of the survey would have been if we hadn't allowed fast travel, but that just wouldn't have been practical.

02:47 I comment on recognising the first message I see in the mausoleum, but then other messages that were present before aren't, so there's a sense in which the perceptible assemblage of messages has changed. Also, unrelated to what's on screen now but I'm currently writing these memos at 2:15pm, which is quite early in the day for me to be doing this work compared to when I used to record the survey footage! Another thing I notice watching this footage back is that my tone seems disinterested, but I know I'm not. That's something that only I can attest myself.

03:03 There's a great moment here where I manage to capture the exact moment a new message spawns into place. There's something oddly magical about it. In the video you can tell I'm surprised.

03:37 I see a message in a corner with a gesture of someone lying down as if in agony and it says "I want to go home" with a large amount of appraisals. I really love messages like this that involve a kind of site specific performance.

03: 59 I can tell I'm trying to manoeuvre the camera so that I can record the gesture better. Also interesting to hear me laugh but then say "that's kind of sad," watching myself and my reactions back I feel an odd kind of dissonance from them.

04:45 Another example of a message on top of an object outside the mausoleum proper.

05:31 Interesting thing where I don't attack when taking a screenshot of a message - there must be something in place that means you can't attack or take another action while reading a message?

05:43 You see another one of these nihilistic site specific performances happening with another message near a steep drop.

06:14 You can hear my trepidation as I notice another message has spawned on top of a grave stone outside of the mausoleum. I can't remember if I spend a long time also trying to get to this one.

06:45 I accidentally smash a pot while taking a screenshot - bad archaeologist!

07:20 "it becomes kind of a platformer" - I can tell I'm going around the gravestone and trying to figure out how to feasibly get up to the message using other objects around it.

07:24 I'm actually surprised that I don't even attempt to get up to the message and read it. I can only assume that this is because I spent a lot of time in the survey the previous day trying to reach a message and failing, so I think I felt some embarrassment from that.

08:28 Theorising on the fly about why messages don't seem to appear in the area off the main path in the mausoleum - is it because people aren't motivated to place them where they wouldn't be easy to see?

08:40 Ok "praise the octopus" is a pretty funny message.

9:02 Message in which the text and placement is a very specific reference to the DLC.

09:37 A very silly site-specific performance about being on the "left" side of the egg, which I love.

11:32 Another site specific performance that seems to reference the imminent DLC.

12:41 Weird thing where I see two messages side by side that are exactly the same and almost with the same number of appraisals - did the same person accidentally write the same message twice?

15:34 "fat coinpurse ahead" message - I also reference the other surveyor having seen this message- which must mean A2 and I had talked about what we'd each separately seen in the surveys, which I didn't specifically remember.

15: 45 The weird intimacy of another's player's ghost avatar feeling like it's interacting with you but not - the odd sense of identification with your avatar body.

16:18 "A fabulous outfit" - love this (what feels like to me) very queer site specific performance in the form of a message gesture. I also sense that my voice sounds more energised at this point and I wonder if having found some interesting messages I'm more motivated.

17:01 Focusing in particular on a message with a high number of appraisals.

17:50: It took me over an hour to do the memos for this particular video recording. It is one of the longer ones at approximately 18 minutes, but it shows you how long it takes to watch, stop and start, take notes and reflect.

Filename: 2024-06-19 23-53-20 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 23/07/25 A1

0:01 Opens with me in the map interface about to reenter the Church of Elleh.

0:24 This time it's night time at the Church which makes the ambiance quite different.

01:16 Another site specific performance, with someone in more plain clothes as seen through the message "gesture." I comment on how its quite striking in its plainness, but I don't know if I would have said that now watching back - I think what's interesting is that the player avatar is obviously "feminine" with a ponytail and no armour.

02:22 Another site-specific message gesture performance but in this case pointing up at the stars. I think this might also be a reference to Ranni and the "age of stars."

03:19 The classic "try fingers but hole?" message stops me in my tracks

03:38 The terrible moment in which I accidentally hit the merchant while trying to take a screenshot of a message. This moment will haunt me for the rest of the survey. I actually got tense just watching it back.

03:50 Almost immediately I see a message saying "praise the merchant" afterwards which is pretty funny.

05:01 I slowly run away from the merchant and then find I can't fast travel. At this point I don't understand how difficult a hostile merchant is going to make my future surveys.

05:47 "Hopefully the merchant won't keep attacking me" oh you sweet summer child.

Filename: 2024-06-19 23-53-20 (Elleh)

Memo 2: 15/08/25 A2

0:00 This is the first video of A1's that I'm annotating, because it was alphabetically first in the file list, although I suppose that's not necessarily the most obvious way to do it. I've read their notes for all five of the videos (I also considered reading each, then doing the notes,

then reading further - lots of ways this could be done). At this point I have finished taking my own notes, but have not finished data entry (which is still revealing new things to me).

0:10 I'm already aware of how A1 has taken a different approach to me here. A lot more conscious discussion of what they are doing. The audio quality is very good, I didn't know what to expect from their setup. The video is a little strange because it's not the full size of the window - I guess an artefact of Steam Deck recording. It is astonishing this game runs on the Deck, honestly.

0:30 So far the main difference I feel is that A1 is quite interested in the context of the game itself, whereas I viewed the game mainly as something to deliver data and facts to me. So I agree that Elleh looks very different at night, but would never have thought to comment on it directly, for example. I think I came in very goal-oriented of wanting to record these messages and understand the players and analyse stuff. Probably a function of the performance anxiety I experienced I guess.

0:51 A1 lets out a little "ahh", I think from looking for a particular button combination. I'm realising that this is not really like any other kind of recording you might listen to. Most forms of recording people are done either in social contexts (i.e. a journalistic interview), or for social contexts (i.e. a Twitch stream). It's rare that someone records themselves alone, for no-one (or at most one person) to review later.

01:16 Ah there's the classic R1 attack screenshot combo, the first of many. It's interesting that A1 is thinking so deeply about messages I would've considered quiet incidental. I definitely dwelled on some messages, but mainly ones that stood out to me. I feel like I was a lot less thorough.

01:45 I've just gone back and noted that A1 uses the phrase 'site-specific performance' which makes me feel very inadequate in my use of and precision with language in my own memos! However I came here to note that I think I disagree with A1's read of the second message - which is normal, of course, us agreeing on them all would be rare. But I think it's going to be interesting to see the nature of our disagreements and how they trend. I suspect I will be less willing to give credit to Elden Ring players' thoughtfulness haha.

01:51 I'm not sure if A1 is going to note this but the Erdtree here is only on fire because this save file is very deep into the game. So most players won't see Elleh like this. It also makes the video files sort of count as spoilers for the game, which is interesting in itself.

02:16 This message is very cool. I suspect it's supposed to be pointing to Ranni herself, but I agree with A1 on the stars connotation.

02:18 I've just noticed A1 didn't take a screenshot of the third message, is that because they confirmed it was a duplicate or are they not screenshotting messages without gestures?

02:49 Ok they screenshot that non-gesture message. I assume they were confidence in the third message being screenshotted already?

02:55 I think I also referenced recording bloodstains at one point and then kind of… didn't.

03:25 Haha that comment from A1 there. Again much more talkative than me! I think I'd just chuckle a bit and say something like "Okay, well…"

03:31 Oh god.

03:36 Fuck. I was thinking before they swung that surely that wasn't close enough to hit, but katanas are incredibly long-range weapons and Hand of Malenia is the second-longest of them all.

03:40 I'm chuckling at A1's extremely calm reaction to this, both in and out of game, as Kale freaks out. I didn't know he mounted the donkey when he fought you. I know the merchants have extremely powerful chaos magic so this should be interesting.

03:46 Oh so the interesting thing here is that the screenshots no longer have the donkey in context, meaning to make sense of them you need screenshots from another day, or the video. I will say it is a major oversight from Valve's part that the screenshot key - a very common function with a dedicated button on other consoles - uses R1, which is an extremely common action button.

04:05 In some Dark Souls games you can block a hit to request them to yield, especially if you've only lightly damaged them, I don't know if that works here.

04:30 I love that they kept recording this as there's technically no need to. I'm also noting that we're quite near the end of the video but they haven't checked on the walls/pillars yet. Do they do a second loop?

04:45 I'm also surprised at how passive he is here, the merchants are incredibly powerful in other areas I think.

05:38 lol lmao

05:39 So no second loop or checking the higher areas, I don't know if that was intentional or an adjustment made because of the issues with the merchant. Interesting though to see how our approaches differ!

Filename: 2024-06-20 20-56-37 (N/A)

Memo 1: 24/07/25 A1

00:10 Very short bit of footage which starts on the title screen, in which I starts it's about 9pm British time and that the DLC is about to drop in approximately 2 hour. I then get a message saying that there is "inappropriate activity" on my account and I have to stop. This is the result of me cloning A2's save file on my Steam Deck, and as I remember it, it took some

time for me to be able to fix the issue and I was very scared I would not be able to access the DLC.

Filename: 2024-06-21 21-07-09 (Church of Elleh and Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 24/07/25 A1

00:15 I open explaining that this is the first survey after the DLC was released. I believe that on the previous day, I watched A2 stream the DLC so that we could decide on survey locations in the DLC opening area. I'm currently watching this without headphones because they were hurting my ears too much and the volume of my voice is good enough in these later videos that I can hear myself just over the laptop speakers. I'm also writing this at 2:17pm in the afternoon after the news just broke that itch.io has shadowbanned NSFW titles on its platform and so that's on my mind.

00:33 Upon the game starting again I immediately get a notification that I have the new "Ring of Miquella" gesture that was specially added for the DLC. This will become relevant later!

01:20 My continuing accidental destruction of nearby objects when taking a screenshot is kind of hard to watch.

01:55 I finally made the decision to at least remove the sword that I'm carrying so that I don't swipe with it! It's sort of frustrating to watch myself cycle through the menu and have difficulty toggling the weapon off.

02:07 You can already see that the merchant is stood up and hostile, though I'm still hoping at that time he won't come after me!

03:23 The merchant starts actively circling and attacking me while I wonder if I've seen all these messages before (I have).

04:00 I talk about how I might have to go to the "Church of Absolution" to have the merchant forgive me.

04:52 Pretty funny watching me hide from the merchant behind a bush and then rotate the camera around to see if he's still following me.

05:41 I get to the mausoleum and there's an NPC there that indicates the DLC is accessible!

06:16 Anticipating and waiting for message to load in

06:53 Another site specific gesture performance, this time indicating advice for how to deal with the boss.

07:30 Another example of a message on top of an object in the area outside the mausoleum.

07:55 Comment on how I get habituated on where I expect messages to appear - feels like there's a sense of spatial habitus.

08:56 Indicidental recording of a glitch where a bit of what appears to be debris is just hanging in the air.

10:01 Seeing other "ghosts" of players ambiently interact with the hand that is the access point to the DLC. Also interesting that because the mausoleum has become a non-combat zone it suddenly feels safer than the Church of Elleh does because of the hostile merchant, and also means I won't punch when taking screenshots!

11:04 another site (and time!) specific with the message "seek corpse."

12:05 An instance of two messages with almost exactly the same site specific performance of the gesture - are people deliberately mimicking each other? Are the affordances of the space inviting this behaviour?

12:51 I mention that I will attempt to access Elleh again after the DLC but I'm pretty sure I don't.

Filename: 2024-06-21 21-07-09 (Gravesite Plains)

Memo 1: 24/07/25 A1

00:09 I start already inside the DLC, I had some trouble mirroring to my laptop in between the two recordings so unfortunately I haven't captured the exact moment I entered the DLC.

00:56 More site specific performances at the DLC entrance!

01:05 Funny moment where I make my avatar crouch down so that the camera can better capture the message gesture.

01:29 Weird doppelganger effect of the gesture being of someone wearing identical armour to me!

01:42 Really great message here "research ahead" and a person doing the new gesture for the DLC! Its great seeing messages that by chance resonate with your wider experience at a particular moment.

02:10 This is probably the point that I've been most enthusiastic about so far when I discuss the new "emote" and how much I adore it. It's also really heartwarming to see all the messages from people excited to play the DLC.

02:20 Had a weird moment watching back where I thought "there's a sense of anticipation," and then immediately afterwards I say those exact words in the footage.

03:00 There is a real sense of me waiting to get out of the more confined space into the wider Gravesite Plains, wanting to get a good shot of the view.

04:00 My interpretation of the gravesite plains as "endless death" and the ghostly graves being a reference to the vast player community. This sounds more morbid than I think I mean it - sure there's endless death, but endless life too - links back to Bo Ruberg's concept of "permalife."

05:03 Difficulty in ascertaining the extent of the survey site given how open the area is- there is also long grass which makes it difficult to see messages.

06:08 Limited bloodstains in this area because it is relatively "sage" - discussion of potential need to survey area where this is not the case.

06:25 I record the moment I touch the site of grace here as well.

06:44 Moment where I look at one message near the site of grace and then the other two seem to immediately disappear - this really highlights how ephemeral they can be, even if sometimes individual ones seem to stick around unhelpfully in other locations.

Filename: 2024-06-21 22-02-20 (Main Gate Cross)

Memo 1: 24/07/25 A1

00:10 Starts off with me already at the Main Cross Site. What's interesting is that I have my sword out again - I'm wondering if this is because I ended up having to fend off enemies on my way there? Anyway I know this is bad because I eventually accidentally hit one of the NPCs.

00:32 I describe this survey area as being "almost like a test pit" because its so small.

00:56 I say how I'm avoiding touching the site of grace because it seems like it makes messages disappear immediately afterward.

01:05 Site specific performance with the beloved NPC!

01:41 The terrible moment where I accidentally hit the beloved NPC and he disappears! I remember instantly being very stressed about this and it becomes a recurring problem

throughout this survey. I just don't understand why I didn't at least put the sword away again! There's also a funny juxtaposition with the message and gesture I'm recording at the same time: it says "behold, angel!" and the player is bowing. It feels like what I've done is almost sacrilegious.

01:55 "This can't keep happening to me." Well. On another note its fun to see ambient activity in the background, in this case there's a deer calmly wandering around nearby while all this happens.

02:35 I'm recording bloodstains in this location, I think because the area is so small and it presents an interesting comparison with Elleh.

Filename: 2024-06-21 22-27-27 (Three Path Cross)

Memo 1: 24/07/25 A1

00:10 Another case where there is incidental recording of wildlife in the background. In this example: sheep.

00:45 Also I notice by this time I have once again resheathed my sword, which seems wise.

01:14: A message that reads: "seek holy but hole" has 9999 appraisals. I don't seem impressed.

Filename: 2024-06-22 22-40-16 (Gravesite Plains)

Memo 1: 27/07/25 A1

00:07 Starts with me stating I'm doing the recording at 10:40pm. As I'm writing the memo, it is 12:14pm on Sunday the 27th. I decided to do some memo-writing on a Sunday because it just works better for me - I feel motivated to do it and I have other things I have to do on weekdays. I guess I feel like I need to justify working on a weekend.

00:44 I'm not entirely sure, but I think it may be possible to hear music in the background of the recording here, which I'm guessing is coming from the pub/flat that backs onto my room. I say this because actually last night I was kept aware by awful loud monotone music coming from there at 1am. It's a pretty regular occurrence for me to be able to hear loud music in my room from there, but I'm not sure if the microphone would have been able to catch it or not.

Also, I had a conversation with A2 about background noises in his survey on Friday and this made me pay more attention to this.

01:00 This has also made me realise I really need to listen with headphones to pick up this kind of background detail.

Anyway, I fast travel over to the first Gravesite Plain Site of Grace but then decide I want to start with the cavern area first, before some messages spawn in and so I change my mind.

01:58 Me being prompted to take a screenshot “in the context of the view” because I get an assemblage of three messages referring to the beautiful view.

3:42 At this point I seem not fully confident with what the extent of the survey area is, calling it “ill-defined,” and I seem somewhat disoriented by doing it “backwards” to the last time.

04:46 I continue trying to get a close up as best I can on message gestures so we can see their outfits and facial features, which can often lead to this uncanny effect where the ghost is overlapping with my player avatar.

05:00 I also make the point that I focus more on individual faces than I did in the last survey. As I write this I now wonder how I even approach describing them in detail.

06:05 This is where I see a bloodstain that originates inside the cavern and it’s someone on Torrent so I try to follow on foot. Then at around 6 minutes you can hear a computer alert as my laptop is out of battery and I need to stop.

06:34 I decide to replicate what they’re doing by getting on Torrent - I remember what goes wrong so it feels quite tense to watch!

06:54 You can hear me frantically pushing buttons to keep up with them, and then of course what happens is I end up jumping off the side of a cliff with them and instantly dying. I think this might be one of only two recorded deaths in the survey? Maybe the only death on camera. This is a really good example of how photographs, and indeed plans, alone just could not capture this well.

07:16 I then spawn back in at the Site of Grace.

07:50 I go and investigate if it were possible to get my runes back - it seems like it’s a completely impossible location to return to.

08:34 It then turns out I can reclaim my runes from right by where the bloodstain is! I am very surprised by this in the footage. It also seems like all the same messages and the original bloodstain are still present after spawning back in again.

10:11 With the emotes/gestures you can’t always see what weapon a person is carrying but in this case they clap and then immediately draw two swords before sheafing them and clapping around in a cycle.

10:35 I'm realising watching it back that in a lot of cases screenshots are just not that useful and maybe it would have been best to just screenshot the footage later? Though, that could lead to differences in image quality.

11:12 There is a message referring to a "hidden path ahead" at the back of the cavern and I try to hit it with a sword… not sure why I do this honestly.

11:37 I then realise there are messages further up the cavern wall, and have to use torrent to get up there. I make the comment that in this survey we've have to be more aware of "verticality" in terms of message placement.

12:00 At this point I can definitely hear a motorbike or something similar go past outside because it's so loud!

12:12 There might potentially be a siren as well?

12:31 I make the point that this is an example of a message that has been placed in the knowledge that it may end up being unnoticed, as opposed to one that is difficult to get to but is conspicuous. Is this an example of metagaming in a way, almost a kind of extension of the game's design? Players are both adapting to and adapting the space to create new experiences for others.

14:52 I record an absence of messages near the Site of Grace but question how this would be reflected in the archaeological record of the site.

Filename: 2024-06-22 22-55-38 (Gravesite Plains)

Memo 1: 27/07/25 A1

00:28 Two messages loaded in just after I broke off from the last recording so I recorded an additional minute of footage.

I find these very short recordings difficult as a viewer because I don't have a lot of time to actually sit with what's going on.

Filename: 2024-06-22 22-56-59 (Three Path Cross and Main Gate Cross)

Memo 1: 30/07/25 A1

00:32 Discussing whether fast travelling to a location versus traversing the map on foot/by Torrent effects the spawning of message in a given location.

01:30 At what point do you stop waiting for messages to spawn in and give up. I also like how the Plain Furnace Golem can be seen pacing around in the background.

02:00 Eventually I give up and just take Torrent over to the Main Gate Cross.

02:24 I remark on seeing fewer messages in the landscape this time.

02:35 I have a sort of delayed reaction realising that the NPC Moore is back after I accidentally hit him last time.

03:15 This is the bloodstain that I most clearly remember from the survey, a player wearing very little at all and sprinting over the edge of the cliff for simply no reason. The blood stain is right in front of Moore so I'm now wondering if they accidentally did the same thing as me and then deliberately killed themself?

03:30 In the process of trying to take a screenshot of the bloodstain ghost I once again hit Moore, which just seems irresponsible at this point.

04:20 I talk about it being "truly unforgivable at this point" but I think I'm just hopeful that if Moore disappeared once and came back, it'll happen again. Also, it doesn't really affect the survey, and I'm more focused on that.

04:50 More site specific performances around Moore.

05:08 Also the problem of "where do you draw the line" in terms of the survey area.

05:24 I was just thinking that since I'm using different headphones to last time, I don't know if I can hear background noises as well as before. However, at this point I hear a really loud roar and think it must be from an energy in the game, but it turns out to be traffic outside my flat picked up in the recording.

05:57 An alert comes up on screen that my Steam Deck is low on battery. These sorts of digital marginalia are interesting.

Filename: 2024-06-22 22-56-59 (Three Path Cross and Main Gate Cross)

Memo 2: 18/08/25 A2

0:35 This is a good point and not something I'd considered. In most cases it's impractical, but particularly between Three Path and Main Gate it's very easy to do. One downside is it might give the *impression* that messages have loaded in an area, but actually they've only loaded in one part of it, whereas teleporting there is sort of a 'fair' reset of the space.

1:10 I also comment on this earlier in my recordings. I think I go with waiting until I see a message, of any kind. But I also had superstitions about how I could speed up the first message appearing.

1:17 Hah A1 immediately says this.

1:43 I wonder if A1's unwillingness to wait longer here was in part because they are talking more than I am, i.e. there's a sense of performance pressure here to keep doing or saying things, or to make the record worthwhile. Also as I'm writing these I'm wondering if A1 is referring to me as "A2" or addressing me directly in their notes on my videos. A ghost appears just as A1 begins to leave which makes me think the server had *just* started to load in content as they left.

2:42 Ah, foreshadowing. I assume this is going to happen again because those messages do not look recordable otherwise.

3:30 Haha ah well. I see A1 has unequipped the sword though, so that'll improve things. The bloodstain is interesting, definitely not the same as the ones I've seen. I like the theory that the NPC has just been killed and they decided to suicide off the cliff, although Elden Ring players are also just weird sometimes.

3:45 A1 is very harsh on themselves in these videos I feel. It isn't stupid!

4:20 Unusual gesture here, don't think I've seen it before.

4:47 People really love this little guy. Understandable! The phrase 'lovable sort' is really buried into my brain along with 'Don't you dare!' as a specific bit of phrasing unique to this game.

5:01 I'm pretty sure I had given up on recording bloodstains at this point. Also I think I'm a lot more lax on what is considered in scope - I would not have any qualms recording this bloodstain if it were a message at this location.

5:20 Really loud noise there from the 'real world' haha. As A1 notes, I also thought this was in-game at first, and it's funny that the recording of the ambient noise is stuff that we didn't hear as people recording the gameplay.

5:58 Some other notification on the Steam Deck here but it's cut off because the recording clips a bit of the top/bottom of the screen. I think it might be a battery warning? I just went back to A1's notes and they say the same thing. Ah A1 in the video confirms it a few seconds later.

6:18 We theorised why assemblages take this shape, both to do with players being directed towards a focal point, but also the collision boxes of messages being non-overlapping.

6:35 Nice bit of emotive commentary from A1 there. Very characterful.

Filename: 2024-06-22 23-03-56 (Three Path Cross)

Memo 1: 30/07/25 A1

00:20 I narrate using the map as a visual aid.

00:50 I can definitely hear some kind of music or singing in the background which is actually quite eerie.

01:17 As it turns out, messages have now spawned in at this location after I made it over the "old fashioned" way.

01:37 I make the comparison between the Site of Grace as being like a hearth, and the common assemblages of messages that form around them feel like where people might sit (if it were a hearth!)

01:47 One really interesting message gesture where the message is "flower" and someone is literally offering a bouquet of flowers. I just looked this up at it is technically a hammer called Varré's Bouquet (https://eldenring.wiki.fextralife.com/Varre's+Bouquet).

02:00 There's also a weird visual effect with the Site of Grace.

02:29 Another site specific performance with an NPC

03:00 Luckily I manage to take a screenshot in this case without hitting the NPC Redman Freyja

03:29 I accidentally start talking to the NPC Hornsent instead of reading a message, I can sense my frustration as I try to skip through the dialogue. Unfortunately the message I was actually trying to read disappears at the same time - this gives more weight to my theory that

when you interact with certain things in the game world, it can cause nearby messages to disappear.

Filename: 2024-06-22 23-12-23 (Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 30/07/25 A1

00:00 This video starts off with me to the east of the Scorched Ruins as I just recorded some footage with the Plain Furnace Golem that is not included in this survey. I once again use the map as a visual aid to show that I'm fast travelling to the Mausoleum.

00:30 I seem to have some difficulty switching between the DLC and main game maps, which is a bit painful to watch.

00:47 When I spawn into the Mausoleum you can see my cursor just for a second on screen, not sure why.

01:12 Again, I think I can hear some traffic noises in the background but it's hard to make out.

01:29 Message referring to another message?

02:00 Site- specific

02:38 Good point about how the area outside the main mausoleum would presumably feel different prior to defeating the boss, because there would be a veil in place.

04:02 Interestingly, I can still see the "glitched" but of debris that's hanging in the air.
This survey feels more brisk but in some ways more confident than before. I'm reflecting a lot on how people would normally occupy this space and how that might affect the placement of messages.

06:11 Site specific performance here with "try jumping" and the gesture of pointing downwards over a steep drop.

07:23 I make a comment about how I feel like there are fewer messages explicitly referring to the DLC at this point, but I only have a limited sample.

08:08 I'm commenting on how post boss fight, and with the introduction of the DLC, this area has become a "non-combat" zone, which is interesting because when Mohg is still present it is very much synonymous with combat (at least with a boss). I'm guessing they did this to stop invasions from other players near the entrance to the DLC?

9:37 I talk about almost having “superstitions” about what may or may not make messages appear.

Filename: 2024-06-22 23-22-48 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 30/07/25 A1

00:00 It’s 9:22pm now, I’ve been doing memoing on and off during the day, I’m finding it hard to focus on honestly. Right now I can hear bird song at dusk though which is relaxing.

00:31 I fast travel not into the Church of Elleh itself, but the nearby “First Steps” Site of Grace because I’m concerned about the hostility of the merchant.
01:13 This is the first time in the survey that I approach from the south, which gives better context for where it lies in the landscape. I’m on Torrent, and this is so I can make a quick escape if I need to.

01:46 Suddenly it seems to have become a stealth game in that I am very carefully peaking through the door to see the merchant and then carefully moving around the periphery.

02:40 I hide behind a dilapidated wall and use the camera to peek behind and see if there are any messages inside and eventually two appear. I also talk about looking to see if there are any messages at a “higher level” and from memory I think this is because A2 had discussed finding messages at higher levels on the building, so I started looking for them not just on the ground.

03:20 I’m able to go into the southern half of the Church and take screenshots of the messages there.

04:13 I move the camera so it’s front-facing and can see a message balanced up on one of the ruined walls of the church.

04:38 Because I know it’ll be easier to try and reach the message when I haven’t already got the merchant on my back, I go for the high up one first, using Torrent to get me up there but then I overshoot it. I seem to either get not enough, or too much height.

05:24 I manage to get most of the way to the message by jumping up the collapsed wall. I actually can’t remember if I manage to get it or not so there’s the tension as to whether I’m going to imminently fall.

05:35 I then notice another one even further up. It’s interesting how, watching back as a spectator, some details like that are less obvious to me than they were originally when I was playing at the time and actively moving the camera.

5:50 I make it! The message says “seek prawn” and has 4 appraisals, which shows at least 4 other people have bothered to make the jump to it like me.

07:20 I fall off trying to reach the higher up message, then try to use torrent to get up there but the controls are just too imprecise.

07:56 I do manage to get up higher on a wall but then I dismount from Torrent, only to find that I cannot remount Torrent while on one of these walls.

09:50 I eventually give up, which is a bit disappointing, but I can also see that I'm getting frustrated with it. There's a long pause with a lot of background noise, I can only guess that I'm moving around a bit or checking something.

10:06 There is a message that says "don't you dare" near the merchant and I quip "too late for that now!" The merchant is actively coming after me as I record the last two messages on the round in the Church.

10:21 There's an interesting message near the entrance to the Church that seems to be referring to the "sound" of one of the grounding crucified people.

10:41 The merchant stops and seems to almost glare at me from the door of the Church.

Filename: 2024-06-24 20-41-48 (Church of Elleh and Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 01/08/25 A1

00:12 I start off explaining how I couldn't survey the previous day because of problems mirroring to my Steam Deck. I can definitely hear music from the pub in the background, a kind of low undulating sound in the background, I'm surprised the microphone picked it up.
Today I'm writing the memo from a friend's house as I'm cat-sitting for the next few days. I have a cat sleeping beside me and it's very peaceful.

0:34 I think they must have been playing live guitar music at the pub because I can hear people clapping and wooping in the background as well.

01:02 I see the same message about "sound" as last time. I do make the point that because I'm surveying during "the day" in terms of the in-game day/night cycle, you can't hear the groaning of the crucified people so it makes less sense.

01:20 I can definitely hear some more guitar music in the background again, and its a melody that I almost recognise.

01:30 There is singing too but I can't quite make that out.
Because I'm seeing a lot of messages that look the same as last time, I decide to leave the Church of Elleh at this point.

02:29 I load directly into the mausoleum, and decide to record two messages even though I've seen them previously, just to show what is visible in this case, though I wonder how that compares with my approach to Elleh. I can also hear the kitchen door in my flat opening and shutting in the background which is very odd - I can pick it out because it has a distinctive sound I'm used to hearing.

03:20 In this recording the background music is much more distinct and so it is actually kind of distracting me from watching the survey. What's funny is I seem to be completely unaffected by it at

the time that I'm actually doing the survey. The sensory experience of watching the footage is weirdly heightened in some ways in terms of how the ambient sound is captured. The 24th of July 2024 would have been a Wednesday - they do tend to have events on different days a week during the pub, but I'm now wondering if they had less live music this year than last year.

03:31 I think I've heard the kitchen door open and close at least 3 times during the last minute or so of footage, which means someone keeps going in and out, potentially my flatmate is hanging up laundry.

04:17 I could hear the kitchen table being moved, then the light being turned off, the door being open and shut again, and then the landing light being switched. I can discern these noises and recognise what they are because I'm so used to hearing and interpreting them in my flat. It is slightly unnerving to me how much the microphone has picked up.

05:00 The first time I've seen the new DLC gesture used outside of the DLC space itself?

05:30 I spend quite a bit of time trying to set up good shots with the gesture in the foreground and me in the background.

08:27 I seem to have accidentally recorded a fair chunk of someone's set at the pub.
Also I comment here about the pattern of there often being an assemblage of three messages close together, but no more.

09:20 I see a message in the corner in the area outside the mausoleum and there's once again a gesture of a person curled up and a comment about wanting to "go home" with a very high number of appraisals. I think this is similar to the previous one I saw but not the same.

09:55 The message says "I want to go home… and then edge" and I make the comment that previously i didn't understand the joke but after seeing discussion online "now I understand." I think there is a certain discomfort I have around discussing these kinds of dirty jokes on the record. Looking back on my memos I don't think it is the same message from before.

11:48 I was reflecting on how accurate the placement of messages is recorded by the server when they are then spawned into other player's games, but then I remember seeing many messages obviously very specifically placed and so this must be pretty accurate.
I now currently have a cat on my lap so can't type easily.

Filename: 2024-06-24 20-56-26 (Gravesite Plains)

Memo 1: 01/08/25 A1

00:08 I start again at 8:56pm and the music from the pub is still audible in the background. I now think that the timing of when I did these recordings was really key for this.

00:30 This time I touch the hand in order to access the DLC area, rather than fast travelling there.

02:38 Observation that I'm seeing more celebratory messages at the entrance to the DLC area as opposed to the mausoleum, which was more common before.

03:12 The sky is a soft purple, and with the outlines of the ghostly graves in the Gravesite Plain and the music in the background, it looks especially beautiful this time around. The music feels like an alternative soundtrack at this point.

03:53 Another bloodstain ghost going off the edge of a cliff on Torrent. At first I thought this could actually be a bloodstain of me but looking closely it definitely isn't. This example shows how people immediately get on Torrent and want to move quickly through the landscape.
I'm also now reflecting on how watching the bloodstain ghosts etc is a kind of indirect, asynchronous observation whereas we are directly observing ourselves in a different way, though still asynchronously.

04:39 And yet another example of someone riding Torrent off a cliff.

05:32 I comment that I'm surprised that it's happened that frequently but to be fair some people may be doing what I'm doing and following a blood stain ghost - mimetic behaviour.

06:17 The message reads: "if only i had a giant… but hole." I'm wondering how to archive these ones. Again, I don't seem very impressed. But now I think I have a more relaxed attitude about it - after all, it's a part of the game's culture so it should be recorded. It's kind of puerile humour but its not offensive.

06:51 I can hear people cheering to the live music in the background.

07:12 There seems to be a glitch with the Gravesite Plains Site of Grace where if you read one message, then other nearby messages will disappear.

09:17 I reflect on the "contrived" nature of the survey in terms of waiting for messages to load in and how this isn't how the "average" player would behave, however we are also interested in an archaeology of the survey, and I would now say even a sensory archaeology of the server.

10:26 There's an assemblage of messages that all seem to be some version of "are you ready?" with one seeming to make fun of the others.

I can also hear people singing Happy Birthday in the background! I have absolutely no memory of this happening while I was doing the recording, its pretty incredible that I incidentally caught it.

The recording actually ends just as they finish singing!

Filename: 2024-06-24 21-07-15 (Three Path Cross)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:17 I start off the next video and the background music is no longer audible.

00:59 I end up wandering around near the Site of Grace and actually scare some sheep away while I do this. I don't seem to notice this really as I'm playing but it's more obvious watching it back. Right now I'm working at the kitchen table in a friend's house and there is a cat sat directly to the left of the laptop, staring at me, which makes it slightly difficult to work.

1:57 I just keep wondering around the surrounding area, and this is making me realise that footage showing the context of each survey site would actually have been potentially very useful.

03:00 The messages eventually load in and I record them. There's another silly one "rump ahead" referring to the nearby NPC Freyja who has their back turned from that angle. It's kind of funny that I "don't know whose rump that's referring to" when I'm playing, but watching it back now it seems pretty obvious.

Filename: 2024-06-24 21-11-06 (Main Gate Cross)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:14 I can hear a siren in the background as I ride Torrent over to the Main Gate Cross site.

00:33 There's A LOT of very loud sirens in the background!

01:03 A sense of relief seeing that the NPC Moore is back again.

01:36 I do seem to be a lot more careful now about which way I face when I take screenshots of messages so as to not accidentally hit any NPCs!

01:56 A message says "seek poison/ and then here!!" with a gesture pointing up into the mountains to the west. I'm not sure if this is a reference to a side quest involving Moore.

02:23 A rare case of two identical messages, with the same gesture from seemingly the same player, being right next to each other - is this a glitch? Or did the player think that their message wasn't placed correctly and so did it again? One has 0 appraisals and the other has 1 which indicates that they are separate unique messages, though it is possible the server could have glitched and replicated it.

03:30 A bloodstain showing someone with an absolutely huge axe. I just looked this up and it turns out to be the Anvil Hammer, a new weapon for the DLC that is found at the Ruined Forge Lava Intake (https://eldenring.wiki.fextralife.com/Anvil+Hammer). This is an optional minor dungeon near the beginning so they must have gone there first in order to have obtained the weapon.

04:49 I speculate as to whether all these bloodstains are the result of people fighting the NPC Moore. Looking it up, you can definitely fight him (and he will invade if you kill two Lesser Kindred of Rot NPCs).

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-24 21-18-50 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:33 I would say I definitely have more energy during this survey, possibly because its earlier in the evening.

01:18 I pretty quickly identify a message higher up one of the ruined Church walls.

02:08 I comment on how there aren't as many bloodstains in the Church as there were the first time we surveyed back in 2022 - is there just generally less player activity in this location?
03:13 Once I climb up part way I'm able to see another message on the other side of the Church. I don't notice it watching the footage back actually. I think there's a real sense of disappointment as I'm not able to reach those messages.

05:10 Watching me trying and failing to get up on the wall is frustrating, and I wonder as a researcher where my responsibility lies or how hard I should have been pushing to reach them.

06:02 I am at least able to reach one part way up a wall which reads "first off, jump attack."

06:44 Watching this back I'm actually now wondering if I'd taken my armour off,I would have been able to jump further. I keep finding more messages at height, but now the merchant has spotted me so there is increased tension.

08:15 I fall off the wall on Torrent, and the merchant is actively stalking me, so I have to quickly try and survey the rest of the messages and bloodstains on the ground.

08:30 I keep getting oddly relevant messages like "merchant ahead" and "try close-quarters battle." Or rather, my current situation brings added humour to these messages.

09:32 I finally actually get hit by the merchant, though he doesn't actually do that much damage thankfully.

10:22 I have to run away, wait for the merchant to return to his place, then go back to check a message that I missed.

11:21 At this point in the video I do also have the realisation that taking off my armour might help. It's actually quite nice having a moment of calm where you can see the Church in the background, its morning in-game time, there's sunlight and a light breeze.

12:20 I think unfortunately I missed some bloodstains that had appeared in this location as I was running away.

13:18 I try scaling the wall yet again, but the merchant is also once again hostile.

14:00 I get hit and blood actually splurts out over a stone nearby which is way more dramatic than I was expecting!

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-29 21-53-39 (Church of Elleh Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:18 Opens with me still in the same location that I left the last recording near the Church of Elleh, recording at around 9pm. I explain that its been a few days since the last recording because I've been away - I'm not actually sure what I was away for at that time.

01:04 I go and check one of the messages in Elleh and notice it is the same as last time so decided to fast travel away. What's interesting here is that this time I notice that there is a gesture associated with the "traitor" message that I don't think I noticed in the previous recording because I was moving around so quickly, so I'm glad I came back! Incidentally, I looked up gestures in the Elden Ring wiki and discovered some have vocals associated with them, and can be used to access secret areas (https://eldenring.wiki.fextralife.com/Gestures).

02:00 I talk about how at this point I feel like I should be prioritising recording in the DLC, which is a fair point.

02:39 I discuss how we were thinking of surveying the Messmer boss area, especially because the well-known player "Let Me Solo Her" had apparently become "Let Me Solo Him" and was helping people out with that boss area. However, I know that in the end we don't end up doing that mostly because of time constraints, and also a feeling that we weren't getting a meaningful sample looking at that area.

3:50 Gesture in which a player bangs on their chest that I don't think I've seen before.

04:19 I see a message referring to "grass" which I believe is a joke that is lost in translation from Japanese.

Also at this point I actually see a ghost either writing a message or putting down a summon sign at the entrance to the mausoleum.

04:47 I make the point that you could just stand in one place and ambiently watch ghosts go by - reminds me a bit of Situationist practises (https://strangematters.coop/cafe-of-lost-youth-modiano-review/).

05:06 Something that I keep coming back to when narrating these recordings is a sort of anxiety about whether they are "contrived" or not. I think in the present, watching them back and at a later stage of the project, I feel much less anxiety about this.

06:16 I see a message that says "no head ahead" and make the connection with the headless statues in the DLC.

07:09 I comment on how we didn't previously see as many people doing the Ring of Miquella gesture outside the DLC< it was only after it became popular within the DLC that this started to happen.

07:50 Because I've anticipated, I notice the message balanced on the ledge as an observer before I see it as a player in the moment.

08:09 I still miss it even as I walk past it the first time!

09:42 I still haven't noticed the message despite stopping near it to record another one! I can only assume I notice it later when I come back round for the second circuit.

10:48 I'm just waiting in anticipation of me noticing this message because I know what happens when I do!

11:55 I accidentally smash a pot while trying to read the message on top of it, and it smashes in a strange way so that some of the sherds are just sort of suspended in mid-air.

12:42 It turns out this just leaves the message to float in mid-air, and even when I try to stand on it, it won't let me, so I can't read it!

14:36 I'm quite fixated here on how a message seems to be almost embedded in the ground rather than resting on top of it like usual - I wonder why this happens?

15:18 Ok I finally notice the message in the very strange position!

16:35 I try to balance on an edge and then jump up from there but it just doesn't feel possible to balance on the small lip around the bottom of this pillar. I would wonder if this was placed with a mod, but mods can't be used with the online version as far as I'm aware.

This is unrelated but I was looking up odd placements of messages in Elden Ring and found that people do indeed return to the Church of Elleh as a place to relax! (https://www.reddit.com/r/Eldenring/comments/tz6oud/anyone_else_instinctively_go_to_church_of_elleh/)

17:04 Unfortunately the footage gets a bit juddery here, but what's interesting is that at this point I take off my player character's armour with the hope of reaching the message because I would weigh less. I don't know if the footage will capture this, but I remember at the time being very surprised that the player character was actually the "female" model - I couldn't tell with all the armour on. Also I didn't know because this wasn't my player character, it's save data that I duplicated from A2.

17:40 I'm glad I'm doing the memos because I don't think my emotional reaction comes across at all, and perhaps I was intentionally hiding it. I think it was just such a vulnerable moment in multiple ways. Also the juddery nature of the footage at this point really makes watching it back very disorienting.

17:52 I actually do fall off and die at this point, and you can hear my player character scream which is quite grim!

18:33 Oddly, when I spawn back in, that message has disappeared but other ones are still present.

18:48 At this point I do say "I feel quite weird about my character not wearing the armour" and put it back on again. It is kind of strange that I feel uncomfortable about this avatar not being covered up.

19:11 I put the Veteran's Armour back on and say "that feels a lot better now." I think there are weird gender dynamics at play for me with this character and my (dis)identification with them.

19:37 I can hear maybe the sounds of pots and pans in the background?

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-29 21-53-39 (Church of Elleh Mausoleum)

Memo 2: 18/08/25 A2

0:00 This is the first of A1's videos that start with a date and time I think!

0:45 You can see the Steam Deck video different a bit more clearly here, daytime so more particles, riding Torrent moves the world faster, the video compression struggles to keep up with the grass moving and such.

0:55 Cool message this one. You don't normally get messages that foreshadow this far ahead. This could easily make players wonder or be suspicious, yet it can hardly be considered a spoiler.

1:16 Ahh I see, another change to try and trigger a server refresh.

2:17 Haha I don't think I had any such self-reflection about pronouncing things right. A1 has mentioned a concern about not being seen as expert enough to study a game, which I understand the conflict surrounding. Not that this relates to it, it just reminded me of it a bit. Also A1 is still being hard on themselves! My protectiveness in these moments also reminds me that my role as supervisor is also influencing my response to these memos.

2:23 Nice mention of Let Me Solo Her which I think I also mention at one point. And A1 explains who that is, and I think i don't, which is interesting. I did explain some things for the viewer but not that one.

2:57 Examining summon signs would've been really cool and I'm sad we didn't do it.

3:43 I also got a message about frost - not this one though I don't think. Yet I couldn't find any evidence Mohg was weak to it. Or that it was even useful.

4:19 Referencing A1's own 4:19 memo: I think it's a translation of a word used to mean 'lol', as the word for grass sounds like laughing in Japanese. This was one of the messages that really confused players at launch.

4:22 Really cool, I also have never seen this. In general I feel like A1 got so many cool moments and messages compared to me!

5:16 This discussion is interesting to me because my approach was very much that I wasn't trying to mimic a play experience, but my individual observations (e.g. of messages) were sort of micro-play experiences. Like reading a single message, that's a play experience in

isolation, but my recording process as a whole is an artificial survey behaviour. I'm sampling many different micro-experiences that players might have from differently angles and perspectives.

6:46 I got confused because I suddenly realised A1 isn't attacking when screenshotting now, but of course it's a peaceful area and you can't use weapons.

7:11 I don't remember whether you get the gesture when you preorder, when the DLC releases or when you actually enter the space. I personally am skeptical people would come back here as we did after the DLC was out (in terms of the 'no head ahead' message)?

7:16 Nice adjustment to get a better screenshot of the gesture.

7:39 The "Yeah, sure" from A1 caught me off guard there haha. I wonder if they had the same read on it as me.

8:00 A1 takes a different route to me here - I do the loop by going along the right and then far to the back, before coming back and doing the left side on the return journey.

8:10 There always were messages here, and it is interesting, this space, as it's sort of unique in the sites we survey in that it doesn't have a purpose in the game but it has the hallmarks of a level design space that *does* have a purpose. The architecture tells you this area is significant, but there's nothing there. I wonder how intentional this is. In any case, it obviously leads people to message there.

9:13 Both 'edge' and 'head' seemed to often have sexual connotations in messages that I saw, although this one obvious has a double meaning.

9:45 Oh that is 100% how I interpreted it too haha.

9:50 Huh did A1 ignore the other side more or less?

10:57 Not exploring the opposite side of the boss arena on the way back either. This is interesting because although I always did explore that area, I always felt like I did it less thoroughly than the side I ran up on the way out.

11:57 I think I also get fascinated by this technique in the mausoleum. Lost forever now. Also noted A1 uses the word 'sherd' in their notes, which made my notes feel decidedly untechnical by comparison haha. UPDATE: I came back to add this after returning to my data entry - I thought I saw the exact same message on a pot, but a week earlier, in 2024-06-22 21-11-46 0:05. However it's angled differently, so it's not the same message but it is at the same location.

12:40 Oh interesting, A1 takes a screenshot of it anyway. I should've done that with my orphaned messages too.

12:47 I love that in the act of screenshotting the warning about the cliff edge A1 almost punches off the cliff edge and dies.

13:19 Ok so *this* time, on the way out, A1 is taking the left side. Oh but now looping back to do the right side again. Wait did they do this the first time out? Let me check. Oh they did! Huh. That's really interesting. So rather than treat the entire space as one area to be looped around, instead they break it into four distinct areas which they loop individually as they go up, and then walk straight back through without needing to check much.

14:19 Interesting that A1 identifies this is a new message based on upvotes - I basically never remembered the number of upvotes, but I also knew it was a new message because the other one I think had an emote of someone dropping to their knees.

14:42 I believe this is to do with the difference between collision for animations and collision for physics. Messages just try to align with the flat surface of the ground which is what's used for physics (running, rolling, etc). But to make the floor look more interesting there's extra bumps and rocks and slabs on top which don't affect physics, but do affect things like lighting or (I think) where players feet step. So the paving slab isn't really there as far as the game's concerned, and so it places the message 'inside' it, sitting on the solid ground below.

15:04 Took the left door this time!

15:19 Interesting, I did not notice this in the video before despite A1 noting it, and I had not seen a message here before in my own playthroughs.

15:40 Yeah it's interesting that the marker is very much "I was here" - the message is kind of irrelevant. So in a sense screenshotting these messages is as good since the player experience of seeing one is just to see it - not to reach it, usually. I do enjoy A1's reaction on mic haha.

16:44 Some frame dropping… Regarding A1's note, I don't think this was placed with a mod - I get the impression it's possible to get into odd places in this map and then use that to walk to other places. But who knows. I feel like if modded messages like this were possible we'd see them in many other places.

17:13 God the character looks so weird without armour, especially with the big puffy helmet. The big gloves and boots sort of give them the oversized proportions of a PS1 cartoon platformer mascot. A1's observations of this were really interesting to me, including for at least one reason I can't include in these notes, but also we both inhabited this character for many hours working on this game, and my character wore this armour set for most of that time, so it does burn into your brain not just as an association with this character but, frankly, with Elden Ring itself. Seeing other characters in other armour sets just feels like I'm seeing some other game.

17:31 The slowdown here is another interesting reason why we can't rely on video to take screenshots from (as I did initially)

17:39 Regarding A1's 17:40 note I think it's interesting that A1 is so quiet here - this is probably the quietest period in the entire video. Also when A1 described this to be previously

in a meeting I assumed they meant they took off all their armour, but in fact it was just the torso slot.

18:17 Returning to get your souls is interesting because it doesn't really matter to us here but it does feel like an appropriate move, or at least to me it would feel weird not to.

18:26 I'm assuming the framerate drop is just on the recording and not on A1's Deck because they've not made any mention of it so far and the game would be unplayable if it was like this. Similarly, not wearing armour technically doesn't matter (I think we even discussed in the first survey whether wearing endgame armour might be considered a spoiler) but we put it back on regardless.

19:14 Signal (?) warning message pops back up.

19:20 I think it's not a coincidence that this is the longest video I've seen and it has this slowdown recording issue - I wonder if it's to do with the buffer or the filesize getting too big? OBS tries to break down large videos into smaller ones but the limit is 4gb I think. It definitely feels like it's getting worse.

19:46 I wonder if it's referring to the NPC that's at the DLC entrance here before you go in.

20:03 I was wondering if A1 would complete the circuit back to the elevator but I don't think that's where they started.

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-29 22-15-21 (Gravesite Plains)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:05 I start again at 10:15pm, entering the DLC area from the Mausoleum.

00:40 I wander around and also jump up and down waiting for messages to appear.

01:04 I reference how there's a specific music trigger in the opening DLC area, however, because I've turned down the volume of the in-game music I can't hear it.

01:49 I definitely think I'm calmer at this point doing surveys, my delivery seems more natural now.

02:35 I comment on how we've discussed as a survey team that there seem to be more messages gestures than the first time we recorded - I think this must be the case, though I can go back and double-check the data as well.

03:47 Someone doing “The Ring” gesture which is distinct from the Ring of Miquella gesture, and could only be received from either pre-ordering the base game or defeating a boss with someone who pre-ordered.

04:36 Another unusual gesture, this time it’s the My Lord gesture.

06:41 Feels oddly nostalgic to see a gesture with a Fingerprint Stone Shield, as this is one of the items that we identified in the last survey from a bloodstain ghost.

07:15 This gesture is quite striking because you can actually see the player character’s face, and often its obscured by a helmet. This player also appears to be wearing Radahn’s Greaves.

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-29 22-23-53 (Three Path Cross)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:34 Discussing the inconsistency of how I access the survey sites - in this case I’m taking Torrent and riding over. I actually think this is nice in terms of putting the survey sites in context and I wish I had done it more frequently.

01:43 It is true that the messages have already loaded in by the time I’ve reached the next site. Also, I talk about how I can’t use the main road otherwise I would attract the attention of the Furnace Golem (who I keep erroneously referring to as a “Fire Giant” here). Though it seems I have somewhat attracted its attention this time.

02:07 I somehow manage to accidentally hit another NPC, this time Hornsent.

02:42 At the time I just seem to find it very darkly funny. Also interesting to see that there is a reference to Hornsent as “lover” - so this is not just used for female NPCs.

03:03 A gesture shows an NPC with the Jar Cannon.

03:23 I laugh a lot at a player doing the Bow gesture in front of Freyja with the message “evening…”They are also holding Siluria’s Tree Great Spear.

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-29 22-28-29 (Main Gate Cross)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

01:17 There is a message underneath Moore - this indicates it was placed by someone who also made him disappear, whether deliberately or not! Its actually archaeological - he had to have disappeared before it could have been made.

02:07 The video cuts out very abruptly at 2:07.

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-29 22-35-14 (Main Gate Cross)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:20 It turns out the footage did cut out part way through. Oddly I start off again on Torrent, I'm not sure why. Also at this point Moore is gone, which indicates I did indeed take a screenshot and hit him in the intervening time, which I'm really not sure I needed to do!

00:29 The message itself read: "I've failed……" which seems to confirm my theory, along with a gesture of someone on the floor looking morose. I think its the Dejection gesture.

00:59 This, again, is a very site specific performance because the gesture is positioned in front of Moore's pot, so its like they have literally taken his place. Also, I keep referring to him as a "merchant," which is incorrect.

Filename: Filename: 2024-06-29 22-37-40 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 03/08/25 A1

00:06 Starts off with some really weird visual glitches!

01:52 I think this is probably the most relaxed I've seemed in any footage- even in how I take Torrent and confidently jump off a cliff to get to the Church more quickly. Also the sunset on the sea in the background was incredibly beautiful, then it quickly turns to rain.

04:09 It's pretty ridiculous that I'm quickly riding in and out of the church recording things trying not to get attacked.

Filename: Filename: 024-07-06 21-33-48 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

00:41 Opens in the Church of Elleh, around a week later. I am now wearing different armour and the merchant is not hostile, this is because I am now using an updated save file.

00:51 I am also holding Melania's sword as well, which seems deeply unwise!

I confirmed that I am now wearing the Verdigris set which can only be obtained once the NPC Moore has been killed later on in the DLC. This is hugely ironic given that Moore is the NPC that I kept accidentally hitting earlier on during the survey, and I have now taken on his likeness!

01:09 I talk about how its oddly disconcerting for the Merchant to not be hostile at me now, I suppose because my previous actions in the game have now been forgotten, its like they never happened.

01:54 Thank goodness I actually put the sword away!

Filename: Filename: 024-07-06 21-33-48 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

00:08 It's now 9:40pm at the time of recording, the video cut out because I had insufficient disk space, unfortunately this happens several times on this day.

00:36 Of the two bloodstains I record, they almost look like they could be the same player wearing the starter Samurai kit?

I start discussing how I loaded in the new save file to easily get access to the area outside of Messmer's boss fight.

Filename: Filename: 2024-07-06 21-52-56 (Church of Elleh)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

00:22 I've started to recap again, though it looks like the video has frozen.

00:34 Annoyingly, I say that “I’m glowing” but I can’t see what’s going on because the video has frozen!

01:09 There’s just a black screen but you can see my cursor moving around as I try to fix it.

02:37 I actually make a pretty strong case for surveying Messmer’s boss area, though I know that unfortunately when I went to sample it we found that it wasn’t necessarily giving us particularly interesting or useful data so we ended up not continuing the survey there.

04:32 A bloodstain ghost shows someone fighting on Torrent.

Filename: Filename: 2024-07-06 21-58-40 (Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

00:19 I talk about feeling like I’m slightly out of practise after not surveying for a week.

00:49 In particular I say I feel more conscious. It’s odd because from a viewer point of view I would say that I feel much more open speaking about my feelings at this stage, even if it has been after a week.

01:41 I notice a message up on one of the gravestones again, I manage to make it most of the way and stop because it’s so “tense.” Funnily enough at the same time a siren can be heard outside.

01:57 The message reads “still no head…” and has 2 appraisals. I make the point that the cocoon can actually be seen from this height even outside of the mausoleum.

03:53 There is a message balanced on the corner of where the cocoon is, which is a very unusual placement.

04:22 I actually manage to get to this message first try! It says “too high up…”

06:31 I end up looking at a bloodstain out of curiosity because its near the cocoon.

07:29 I comment on how I’m anxious about doing longer recordings because of problems not having enough disk space on my computer.

07:49 I attempt to get up onto another grave stone to see a different message and fail, then see a ghost ambiently get up there to presumably read the message.

09:43 I have to balance on top of a lever and do some other jumps but I make it across! The message reads: “praise the climbable spot!” and it has 5 appraisals.

10:08 There’s a real sense of accomplishment here because previously I couldn’t reach any of these messages in difficult spots. I wonder if my platforming skill has actually increased over time trying to reach these messages.

10:40 At this point the video freezes.

Filename: Filename: 2024-07-06 22-24-26 (Mausoleum)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

0:55 I start again and there are some different messages, but interestingly, the pots are still broken.

Filename: Filename: 2024-07-06 22-28-14 (Gravesite Plains)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

00:48 I jump around waiting for messages to appear.

01:43 It feels like it takes forever for the messages to appear, but eventually they do! Also I can hear a kitchen cupboard closing in the background.

02:41 There is a message on the cliff behind where you spawn, that says “behold, message!” It has the Finger Snap gesture which is originally given to you by Merchant Kale, funnily enough.

05:06 I can now show the whole DLC map because of the new saved data.

Filename: Filename: 2024-07-06 22-33-59 (Three Path Cross)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

00:15 At this point there are no longer any NPCs at this location because of events that have happened involving them. It feels strangely lonely. Also watching the last few recordings of the survey makes me feel oddly sad, at this point I think I still planned to do more surveys but that didn’t happen in the end.

00:37 Just saw an ambient ghost that had the same gear I used to- is it possible its me from the past?

01:29 The big golem has also disappeared because A2 must have defeated it. I now realise that as you progress in the game, the landscape becomes more empty? It feels very sad.

Filename: Filename: 2024-07-06 22-33-59 (Three Path Cross)

Memo 2: 19/08/25 A2

0:00 I've sort of enjoyed noting videos again, especially ones I didn't record. I'm a little sad this is the last one.

0:02 New armour! I think A1 has observed this but it's funny that this armour is similar to that worn by the NPC they keep killing.

0:27 Wow that really is exactly our character model, with the same weapon. The only thing I'd say is that the face looks slightly different on this video but it's obviously not very zoomed in so hard to say. That's really wild!

0:37 Haha A1 observes it live.

1:08 I think I also made this observation about the NPC absence feeling very weird/sad.

1:34 Oh wow going off piste here haha.

2:19 Never change, Elden Ring.

2:42 It's interesting, I kind of feel like it *does* work as it's sort of part of the texture of the game's odd timeline. You see ghosts of other players (who are also Elden Lord) and you see messages that have weird foreknowledge of the future, so it makes sense to also see messages stuck in the past. (I say, as I watch a past version of someone else play a game in the present, which I take notes on for a future ghost to read).

Filename: Filename: 2024-07-06 22-37-21 (Main Gate Cross)

Memo 1: 04/08/25 A1

00:51 Another strange case of a person wearing minimal clothing and jumping off a cliff near the survey site.